FPark 7-15-75

FBI burglarized foreign embassies

WASHINGTON (AP) — The FBI burglarized foreign embassies and other places in the United States for nearly 30 years to get information considered necessary for national security, FBI Director Clarence M. Kelley said Monday.

"Yes, the FBI has conducted surreptitious entries in securing information related to the security of the nation," Kelley said in response to questions at a news conference.

He declined to say how many break-ins were conducted, describing the number only as "a few" and "not many."

He also declined to identify specific targets of the breakins, saying that he cannot discuss many details publicly because of the pending investigation by the Senate Select committee probing the Central Intelligence Agency and FBI intelligence operations.

Asked whether there were FBI break-ins at foreign embassies in Washington, Kelley replied, "Without naming or designating victims or institutions, I can only say there were a few, concerned with counterintelligence, foreign in nature, subsequent to 1966."

He also was asked whether civil rights organizations were among the burglary targets. "I'm not going to say anything about where they were or against which organizations they were directed, only to say they were, and I hope that will satisfy you," he replied.

He said later, however, that he did not intend to confirm that civil rights groups were burglarized.

Kelley said the break-ins began as early as World War II and continued through the 1960s. He declined to say when the last one occurred but said he has not been asked to authorize any since taking office two years ago.

"I have not had a single request to conduct such activity since I have been made director," Kelley said. "If it ever came up and it became a matter of grave concern, I would present it to the attorney general and I would be guided by his views."

He said former FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover changed the burglary policy in 1966 because he thought "in the context of the times, it was not a viable procedure."

"In 1966," he said, "all such activity was terminated except for a small amount regarding foreign intelligence, which we felt had a grave impact on the security of this nation."

However, he declined to say whether there was a substantial reduction in the number of break-ins conducted after 1966.

Kelley said the Justice Department is reviewing the circumstances of the break-ins to determine their legality.